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SUBJECT: FRENCH MFA OBJECTS TO CURTAILING NIGERIAN UNOCI
DEPLOYMENT

REF: STATE 48450

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Josiah B. Rosenblatt.
Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) Africa Watcher shared current U.S. thinking on how to reinforce the UN presence in both Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire during a March 29 meeting with AF Acting DAS-Equivalent Isabel Guisnel. Guisnel objected strongly to recalling the Nigerian mechanized company on loan from UNMIL to UNOCI. SC failure to extend the company's temporary Ivoirian deployment would send the wrong signal, Guisnel argued. She highlighted new militia threats against Ivoirian cabinet members. She noted the Guiglo area's continuing insecurity and the risk of militia recruitment there among Liberian renegades. She observed moreover that PM Konan Banny, backed by the International Working Group, was making real if modest progress and it was vital to prevent any flare-up of insecurity. Soro's March return to Abidjan was an important step forward, she judged. The Nigerian company was making a valuable contribution, both operationally and psychologically.

¶2. (C) Also problematic for France was the U.S. draft's call to again extend the increase in UNMIL's personnel ceiling to 15,250 as had been agreed temporarily in paragraph 6 of Resolution 1626 (2005). Guisnel claimed that the MFA had not budgeted for the added costs.

¶3. (C) Guisnel welcomed indications that the U.S. would consider an increase to UNOCI of up to 1,500 personnel pending reconfiguration of other UN peacekeeping operations in Africa, notably UNMEE. She remarked, however, that the proposed reinforcements would still be smaller in number than requested by the SYG.

Pending Personnel Turnover at MFA Africa Directorate

¶4. (SBU) Guisnel revealed that the summertime would bring significant personnel changes in the MFA Africa Directorate. The turnover was due to the usual cycle of rotations as diplomats completed their domestic assignments, not to any policy shake-up, she commented. Nonetheless, the changes could be deep, including A/S-Equivalent Bruno Joubert, PDAS-Equivalent Elisabeth Barbier, West Africa DAS-Equivalent Bruno Foucher and East Africa DAS-Equivalent Remi Marechaux. Guisnel, who is Foucher's deputy, will remain in place.

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Stapleton